

Week 1

We live in a rat-race culture and at the beginning of the year many of us feel overwhelmed by all the things that we are expected to do in the upcoming year. The scripture speaks to the heart issues that cause our frantic and busy states. Let's pay attention to and submit to the God's Word in this area of our lives this year, and experience the fruit and rest that it brings.

Today's message focuses on the well known story of the two sisters, Mary and Martha. Most of us cringe, identifying with Martha, because we know that we are far more interested in getting things done than spending time with Jesus. Ironically, our business

1. We Can Miss Out On the Simple and Significant Things in Life When We Are Distracted, Anxious and Troubled

- Read Luke 10:38-42

We tend to give Martha a hard time in this story and probably unjustifiably so. Just imagine for one minute what it must have been like for her when the group of thirteen men arrived unannounced, leaving her scrambling to accommodate them with appropriate Middle Eastern hospitality. That kind of thing would stress most women out, but consider what it must have been like without running water, electricity, a fridge, microwave or a mad dash to the local Woolworths. Making a meal in those days would have taken a huge amount of planning and effort, as well as a considerable cost.

As Jesus was a really good family friend, it would have been Martha's honour to have him and his disciples in her home. The text says that she *welcomed* them. But in the moments that followed her desire to be hospitable was hijacked by the magnitude of the task. Many of us share a similar struggle. We have honourable desires to serve our families, the Lord and the church, but when the reality of the task hits us, we totally freak out with stress and end up being unpleasant to be around.

Martha's stress levels allowed her to become inward-thinking and self-absorbed. She felt resentful towards her sister for not helping her, and she felt uncared for by Jesus because he didn't seem to care that Mary was not helping. She could not see past her own feelings and perceptions about the situation.

- ❖ Q. How do you cope when things are beyond your perceived ability to manage?
- ❖ Q. In what ways do you experience conflict between wanting to serve others and not being able to manage your stress levels because you are so thinly spread?
- ❖ Q. When last were you resentful towards someone else because you felt as though you were the only one who cared and was willing to do all the work?
- ❖ Q. What was your response to the seemingly slack person? (E.g. Did you give them the cold shoulder? Did you go into self-pity mode? Did you gossip about it to anyone else? Did you get angry and defensive? Etc.)

2. Jesus Doesn't Want That Kind of Life for Us

- Read Mark 1:29-39

Jesus dealt with Martha ever so gently. He did not for one minute trivialise the magnitude of the task at hand, but he bypassed it by zooming in on the deeper issue: her anxious and troubled heart. Jesus knew her real need and provided her with the only solution: HIM.

Most of us feel that in order to be spiritually healthy, we need to be doing more, being more and stretching ourselves to our limits. In doing so, we miss Christ himself, and we burn ourselves out.

- ❖ Q. What was Martha's heart issue?
- ❖ Q. Why do you think it is important that we understand the gentle and compassionate tone that Jesus used with Martha when he dealt with her?
- ❖ Q. How did Jesus respond to Martha's complaint and why did he respond that way?
- ❖ Q. How can we guard ourselves from the kind of stress that causes us to lose perspective and burn out?

3. Purpose > Priorities > Planning

Jesus modelled for us what true rest and peace looked like in and through his purposeful and productive schedule. He would have been physically exhausted at times, but despite that he prioritised spending time with God. He made sure he got his rest from God (getting up really early to do so) and that kept him full of the life of the Spirit and focused on his purpose. As his priorities were then aligned with God's, he didn't get bogged down with all of the apparent need around him, but instead stuck with his mission and purpose.

- Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Isaiah 43:6-7, 2 Timothy 2:15, Matthew 11:28-29

We too need to keep finding our rest in God and then allowing that to determine our priorities and planning. Scripture give us all the same purpose: to love, serve and live for God and his glory. We can only do that if we, like Jesus, spend time with the Father and spend time in his word.

- ❖ Q. What can we learn from the way in which Jesus stayed connected to his purpose?
- ❖ Q. Have you ever sat down at the beginning of a year and thought about how you want to spend your time, energy and money in order to honour Christ? (Are you prepared to do that this week?)
- ❖ Q. What decisions or plans for 2016 has God already now challenged you to lay aside because of this message and why do you think he is asking you to do this?